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A radio talk by W. W. Vincent, chief, Western District, Food and Drug Administration, delivered Thursday, October 23, 1930 through KGO and associated NBC stations. ★

Good Morning, Friends! I am going to talk about dried fruits today. You may not be interested in dried fruit - nevertheless it holds a very important place in the economic life of the fruit industry and the fruit industry is a major activity of the West. Probably 30,000 growers in California and Oregon alone are producing fruit for this business.

I suppose that the production of dried fruits was one of the first things man learned in the art of food preservation. They tell me that raisins have been found in some of the ancient Egyptian tombs. It is probably true that fruit drying in those days was done mainly by individuals, or by families within a community, who owned a few fruit trees. Drying operations in those days probably consisted merely of submitting the fruit to the sun. Some fruit, of course, is still dried in that way. Today we exercise considerably more care in preparing dried fruit. Some of it we dry artificially, calling this process dehydration. You might be interested to know that, excluding citrus fruits, juice and table grapes, 65 to 75 per cent of California's total fruit production reaches the market as dried fruit. Other states have similar stories to tell. We also import large quantities of dried fruits, such as currants, dates, and figs.

Fruits generally dried, in the order of their tonnage, are raisins, prunes, peaches, apricots, apples, figs, pears, and dates. And the growers in those localities where fruit is produced are generally well aware of the scope of the Federal food and drugs act. But in case you don't know, the act insures you a fruit product that is clean, sound, and truthfully labeled. The Government standard for dried fruit calls for the clean, sound product resulting from the evaporation of the greater portion of water from properly prepared fresh fruit. The term Sun Dried is commonly used to designate that product which is dried without the use of artificial heat. Evaporated and Dehydrated are terms commonly used to designate the product dried by artificial means. The law sets a moisture limit of 24% for evaporated apples, in addition.

So much for a very brief description of the dried fruit industry and the food and drugs act as it applies to that industry.

There have been some important improvements in the dried fruit business within recent years. I think I will tell you about Federal activities under the pure food law as they apply to just one commodity, dried figs. You all know that we grow considerable quantities of figs in California. They also grow figs in other sections of this country. In addition to our domestic production, we imported in 1928 nearly thirty-one and a half million pounds of dried figs, and in 1929 more than thirty-five and a half million pounds. While you may buy packages of dried figs at the store now and then, the bulk of our dried-fig supply goes into fig

paste. And this fig paste goes into Fig Newtons. And those Fig Newtons are sold in every town in the United States. That's one use for dried figs.

In twenty-three years' operation of the Federal pure food laws, the Government officials who enforce these laws have naturally paid attention to the quality and wholesomeness of dried figs, as well as all other dried fruits. The law specifies that figs showing mold growth or fermentation are considered decomposed within the meaning of the law. Figs that show evidence of the action of larvae, worms, or insects are considered filthy within the meaning of the food and drugs act. All figs produced in this country and all figs imported receive the earnest attention of your Food and Drug Administration. An example of this attention comes in figures from my district. During the year 1927, for instance, the Western District of the Food and Drug Administration had made 40 seizures of figs, involving over 94,000 pounds. The Central and Eastern Districts seized an amount slightly exceeding one and a half million pounds. These sound like big figures, but you must remember that they represent only a small proportion of the total fig output of the country. Federal foods officials in the East give imported figs the same careful attention. They held up slightly over eleven million pounds of figs in 1928, and almost eleven million pounds in 1929. These bad figs came mainly from Turkey, Greece, Portugal, and Italy, with smaller amounts from other European countries. Many of these lots were returned to the country of export. Lots that were not returned went through a careful sorting process by your Government agents by which the bad figs were taken from the good figs and destroyed.

The first aim of the United States Department of Agriculture is to foster and promote farming, and the Department is charged, in addition, with the enforcement of certain definite laws. And so your Government foods officials - who are members of the Department of Agriculture - considered it their duty and pleasure to help make the fig producing business pay by showing growers and importers how they can improve the quality of the figs they produce and sell. But your Federal foods men consider it equally, or more, important, to safeguard the interests of the buyer, whether he is buying figs or other foods or drugs. And so in the twenty-three years' operation of the food and drugs act, these officials have inspected figs to see that they complied with the law before they reached the ultimate consumer, and they have given the growers and importers practical suggestions on how they can make more money in their business by selling a better product. Various fruit associations have cooperated whole-heartedly in this program. Fruit growers and farmers generally, now recognize that the food and drugs act is completely for their protection.

I could tell you other stories of improvements that have been made in the dried fruit business. Growers and producers are constantly on the alert to take any measures that will insure them a more wholesome product and a product of higher quality. Today we are exporting dried fruits, such as raisins, apples, peaches, prunes, and apricots, to many foreign countries. California raisins, for example, reach clear to New Zealand. And if buyers in these foreign countries are recognizing the merits of dried fruits, is it not reasonable to suppose that our own buyers should be interested in knowing something about them? Don't you want to know

what their labels mean? Don't you want to know, if you buy intelligently, what dried fruits' equivalents in fresh fruits are?

Prunes are a very common food - everybody knows about them. About 80% of the world's supply is produced in the United States, the bulk in California and Oregon, with some production in Southern Washington and Western Idaho. A prune is a plum, you know, - but not all plums are prunes. Prunes are simply those varieties of plums which can be dried with the pit in them without resulting souring or fermentation. The chief varieties grown in California are French prunes, Imperial prunes, and Sugar prunes. The very large sizes you buy are mainly Imperial and Sugar prunes. The Italian prune is most commonly grown in Oregon, although they grow some French prunes there. Southern Washington produces a few Italian prunes, which are generally sold along with the prunes of Oregon. A tip you might appreciate: The Oregon or Italian prune is generally larger than the French type of prune, and is more tart, contains a somewhat higher acid content and less sugar. Label readers will be interested to know that they are labeled Oregon Prunes. Coe's Golden Drop prune, commonly known and sold as the Silver prune, is a large yellow fruit. In its preparation, this prune is subjected to the fumes of burning sulphur, which in part gives it the beautiful golden color by which you may recognize it. These prunes go mainly to certain large eastern cities.

When you buy a pound of dried prunes, you get the equivalent of $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 pounds of fresh prunes as received for drying. When you read the labels on the prune cases next time, see if you find figures such as 30-40 or 60-70. These figures show how many prunes of that size it will take to weigh one pound. As a rule, the larger figure approximates more nearly the number to be found in a pound, since packers are more generous with smaller sizes. Smaller prunes sell for less money.

Now let's consider for a minute the so-called cut fruits - those from which the pits are removed, such as peaches, apricots, and nectarines. We shall also include pears, because after coring, pears are handled in a similar way. You may want to know how these cut fruits are prepared for sale. First the packers split the fruit, then remove the pit. Then they put the fruit on trays and run these trays into small sulphur houses, where the fruit is exposed to the fumes of sulphur dioxide for a short time. This treatment helps to break up the cell structure of the fruit, thus speeding up evaporation of moisture. It also sets the natural color of the fruit and prevents darkening, with which you are probably familiar. When they take the trays of fruit from the sulphur house, they place them in the sunshine until the moisture content is reduced to a figure around 18 or 20 per cent. Then they put the fruit in lug boxes and convey it to the packing house. Then they run the fruit over sorters that sort it to size. In this grading process, some concerns sort out most of the fruit that could be considered objectionable from the food standpoint. After grading - if the fruit is not to be packed immediately - they place it in storage containers until it is ready for use. But before they pack the fruit into boxes, they generally wash it in water, sort it again, and then subject it to the fumes of sulphur dioxide. Sulphuring, by the way, helps to brighten up the color of the fruit and, as I said before, keeps it from turning dark. Sulphuring also prevents any fermentation that might take place after the fruit leaves the packing house. Sulphur dioxide has certain preservative qualities and in limited amounts is not harmful to the consumer.

Now when you go to the store to buy dried peaches, apricots, pears, and nectarines, remember that size of fruit is the principal factor in setting its price. This is true, at least, in the so-called better grades. You will find the largest or finest dried fruits labeled Jumbo - the next grade as Extra Fancy - then Fancy - Extra Choice - Choice - and Standard. Fruit labeled Standard is the least desirable, since it is very small and generally not uniform in color, indicating a variation in ripeness.

There is still another grade of dried fruit, but you may not run across it. This kind of fruit is called Slabs. Slabs, of course, are not so attractive in appearance as the other grades I have mentioned, but from the taste standpoint, it is probably the best dried fruit produced, provided it is handled carefully throughout its preparation. Slabs are made from very ripe fruit of full sugar content. This fruit, having been so ripe, will not hold its shape when cut, or before it is cut, but flattens out in the drying tray.

I did not tell you the fresh fruit equivalents of all the dried fruits you buy at the store. Here are some of them: One pound of dried peaches or dried pears is equivalent to 5 pounds of fresh peaches and pears. One pound of dried apricots is equivalent to $5\frac{1}{2}$ pounds of fresh apricots. One pound of dried nectarines is equivalent to about $5\frac{1}{2}$ pounds of fresh nectarines. The average moisture content of these fruits as they leave the packing house is about 25%.

Just another word about the sulphur dioxide treatment. Some people do not want fruit that has been treated with sulphur fumes and some manufacturers, always alert to the public wants, sell unsulphured fruits, which is so labeled. But if your fruit has been subjected to sulphur dioxide treatment, you will always find that the labels say so. Unsulphured fruit is usually darker in appearance than sulphured fruit. There has been some discussion as to whether the sulphuring process is objectionable from the health standpoint. Without going into that in detail, I can say that extensive experiments show that sulphur dioxide used in the limited quantities in which it is ordinarily found in food products is not injurious to health. If sulphur used in these limited quantities were injurious to you, your Federal food and drugs act would not allow interstate traffic in sulphured fruit.

Well, my friends, my time is about up. I will have to tell you about figs, raisins, dates, and apples, some other time. But remember, if you want to know more about dried fruit - or more about becoming a discriminating buyer of all food and drug products - write to W. W. Vincent, U. S. Food and Drug Laboratories, San Francisco. A postcard will bring you free all my read-the-label information.

I shall talk about cheese next week. You may be curious to know that there are about 150 types of cheese produced in the world today. Next week I'll tell you where these different types come from, and give you some pointers on how to buy cheese with discrimination.